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CEREBUS

RICK'S STORY

4

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223
OCT

E X C E R P T

Once I said to myself it would be a thousand times better for Jim to be a slave at home where his family was, as long as he'd *got* to be a slave, and so I'd better write a letter to Tom Sawyer and tell him to tell Miss Watson where he was. But I soon give up that notion for two things: she'd be mad and disgusted at his rascality and ungratefulness for leaving her, and so she'd sell him straight down the river again; and if she didn't, everybody naturally despises an ungrateful nigger, and they'd make Jim feel it all the time, and so he'd feel ornery and disgraced. And then think of *me!* It would get all around that Huck Finn helped a nigger to get his freedom; and if I was ever to see anybody from that town again I'd be ready to get down and lick his boots for shame. That's just the way: a person does a low-down thing, and then he don't want to take no consequences of it. Thinks as long as he can hide, it ain't no disgrace. That was my fix exactly. The more I studied about this the more my conscience went to grinding me, and the more wicked and low-down and onery I got to feeling. And at last, when it hit me all of a sudden that here was the plain hand of Providence slapping me in the face and letting me know my wickedness was being watched all the time whilst from up there in heaven, whilst I was stealing a poor old woman's nigger that hadn't ever done me no harm, and now was showing me there's One that's always on the lookout, and ain't a-going to allow no such miserable doings to go only just so fur and no further, I most dropped in my tracks I was so scared. Well, I tried the best I could to kinder soften it up somehow for myself by saying I was brung up wicked, and so I warn't so much to blame; but something inside of me kept saying, "There was the Sunday-school, you could 'a' gone to it; and if you'd 'a' done it they'd 'a' learnt you there that people that acts as I'd been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire."

It made me shiver. And I about made up my mind to pray, and see if I couldn't try to quit being the kind of a boy I was and be better. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn't come. Why wouldn't they? It warn't no use to try and hide it from Him. Nor from *me*, neither. I knowed very well why they wouldn't come. It was because my heart warn't right; it was because I warn't square; it was because I was playing double. I was letting *on* to give up sin, but away inside of me I was holding on to the biggest one of all. I was trying to make my mouth *say* I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go and write to that nigger's owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie, and He knowed it. You can't pray a lie — I found that out.

... *continued on last page*

CEREBUS
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RICK'S STORY
•
(Cerebus 220 to Cerebus 231)

MONTHLY
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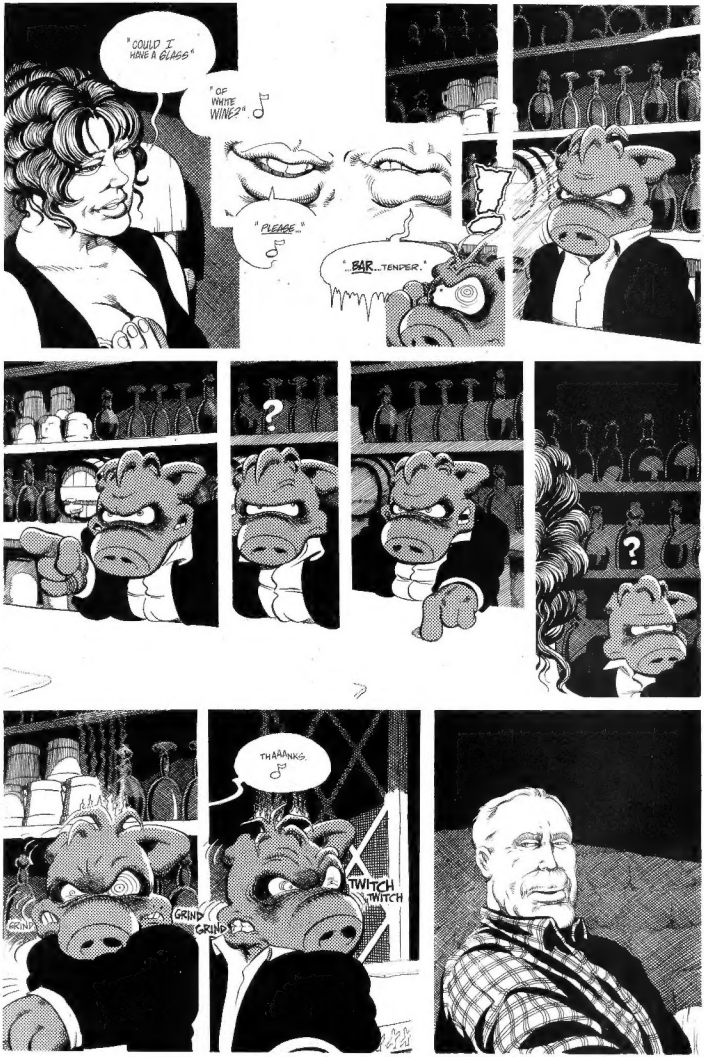
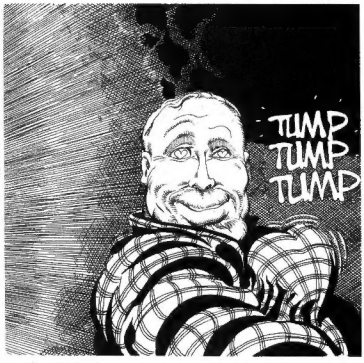
HAHAHAHA
YOU'RE KIDDING
?
NAY THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID:
"VIKTOR GOT REALLY MAD AND HE HAD A BIG KNIFE AND
VIKTOR?! HAHAHA
OHHHHH SHIT
NONONO -- HIGH I GOT IT. WHEN I WAS UNLOADING FREIGHT ON A DOCK IN.. IN--
IEGI? LOWER FELLOW .. I FORGET.. DOESN'T MATTER
THERE WAS A WALL STICKING OUT OF ONE OF THE CRATES, SEE
BEDUIN-- THAT WAS IT-- BEDUIN..
THE DAMNED THING ABOUT IT HAHAHA
THE DAMNE DEST THING ABOUT IT WAS:
THERE WAS NO DOCTOR FOR MILES AROUND.. JUST THIS OLD WICCA WOMAN
A WHAT? WOMAN...
A WICCA WOMAN
OH! ? AYE.
HEHEHEHEH! VIKTOR...? HAHAHA
AND YOU SAY THAT IT'S A LIE THAT SOME PEOPLE SHOULDN'T DRINK?
"KNOW YOUR NAME"
SHE SAYS
I TOLD HER I WANTED THE "NO PAIN" ONE
NAY- CEREBUS A CREED THAT SOME PEOPLE SHOULDN'T
KLIK KLAK
AND THEN SHE SHAKES THE OTHER ONE AT ME AND SAYS "NO PAIN, THIS ONE-- LEAVE BIG SCAR-- YOU CHOOSE"
AND SHE SHAKES ONE AT ME AND SAYS "THIS ONE HURT FOR ONE DAY-- LEAVE NO SCAR"
SO SHE SHOWS ME THESE TWO POULTICES -- THAT LOOKED LIKE SEAWEED OR HEH-HEH= BIG FURBALLS
YEAH EXACTLY
CRAZY
I'VE NEVER MET HER BEFORE IN MY LIFE SO I FIGURE SHE'S YOU KNOW
AS IF HA-HA AS IF THAT'S MY NAME OR SOMETHING
"THEN SHE SPITS ON THE GROUND - AN' SAYS (REAL MEAN-LIKE)
"SO, OLD FOOLISH- CHOICE!"
HUNH! I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT THIS IN YEARS
ANY WAY
SHE TELLS THE GUYS WHO BROUGHT ME TO HER TO LEAVE... SO THEY LEAVE.... AND SHE DOESN'T EVEN LOOK AT MY WOUND
SEE--
SHE JUST LOOKS IN MY EYES

KAK
LEAP
TIP TAP TIP TAP TIP TAP TAP
DRIP
SCRAAAWL
CEREBUS WILL BE BACK IN A MINUTE...

HI!
HI.
LOOK, CEREBUS KNOWS THAT CEREBUS SAID THAT CEREBUS WAS LEAVING TODAY. WELL CEREBUS ISN'T LEAVING TODAY
BUT IT'S NOT WHAT YOU
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS. SOMETHING'S... COME UP. SO CEREBUS HAS TO STICK AROUND FOR A ...LITTLE WHILE... BUT CEREBUS IS STILL... LEAVING.
SO IF YOU CAME IN HERE WITH SOME CRAZY IDEA ABOUT GETTING...
WHITE.
WINE.
GOODNESS! HA-HA
WHERE ARE MY MANNERS? WHAT I MEANT TO SAY WAS:


"COULD I HAVE A GLASS"
"OF WHITE WINE?"
"PLEASE."
"BAR...TENDER."
?
?
TH'AAANKS.
TWITCH
TWITCH
GRIND
GRIND
GRIND

TWITCH.
GRIND
TINK TINK TINK


TUMP
TUMP
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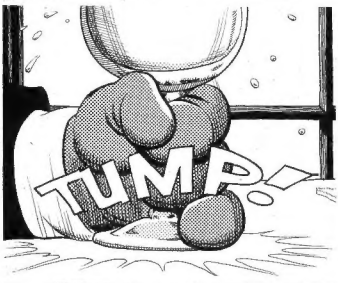
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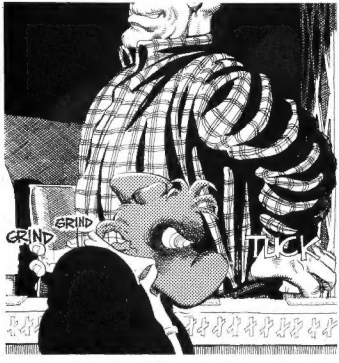
THANKS AGAIN!
GRIND
GRIND
GRIND
TWITCH
TWITCH


GRIND
GRIND
TICK

TWITCH
TICK

HI THERE
"HI THERE" YOURSELF
MY NAME'S RICK - RICK NASH
HOW DO YOU DO? I'M JOANNE.
JOANNE
THAT'S A BEAUTIFUL NAME
THANKS. I LIKE IT
YOU.. UH..
TWITCH
YOU MIND IF I.. SIT DOWN?
TUCK
TWITCH
BE MY GUEST.

You must be new around here, Mr. Nash.

Please. Call me Rick.

All right...(trying it out) *Rick.*

I'm new everywhere.

(ironically) *Oh, really.*

Uh-huh. I'm a writer.

(imperious) *I see.* (patronizing) *And what sorts of things do you write?*

Romances, mostly.

(the little girl) *Oh! I* love *romance. Are you going to put* me *into one of your stories?*

I wouldn't have come over here if I* weren't *going to.

Well! (now that *that's* settled) *What sort of character will I be?*

Divine Radiance.

(laughing) *Now,* that's *an odd name.*

It's not a name. It's a...*(pretending to be at a loss for words) (looking deeply into her eyes) *It's an* essence. *I always start with the* essence *of the character* (smiles) *and build from there.

(coy) *And what's Divine Radiance going to be like?* (digging deeper) *What's she going to* do*?*

She...illuminates.* (offering depth) *She's the original connotation of Terim from antiquity...she's Tarim's Wisdom.

(laughing) (retreating to the shallows) That *doesn't sound like much fun.*

(laughing in turn) ***Possibly not.*** **(maintaining the depth)** ***But that's who she is.***

(sulking) I *was hoping she'd have a* grand adventure.

(immediately) ***Oh, she's* much** ***too wise for* grand** ***adventures.***

(considering it) ***She has* little** ***adventures.* (knowingly)** ***So she doesn't get hurt.***

(a little too close to home) (rueful) *She sounds like a big coward.*

(to the rescue) ***Actually, she's very, very brave.* (conspiratorial)** ***She's* really** ***only afraid of one* thing.**

(drawn in) *And what's that?*

***Her own strength.* (wink)**

THAT... THAT... BASTARD MOVING IN ON CEREBUS'S
"ON CEREBUS'S - WHAT?"
SHUT! UP!
AND THAT... THAT SLUT SITTING THERE STARING AT CEREBUS AS IF
GRIND GRIND
"AS IF" CEREBUS WAS STANDING HERE... STARING AT HER... TWITCHING ... AND GRINDING HIS TEETH?
SHUT!
GOOD POINT.
AYE
AYE
AYE
TWITCH
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
CEREBUS ISN'T GOING... CRAZY... AGAIN, IS HE?
NAY--WHY DO YOU ASK?
WELL -- THE WAY CEREBUS WAS TWITCHING AND GRINDING HIS TEETH...
CEREBUS WOULD SWEAR CEREBUS WAS
JEALOUS!
HAHA!
TWITCH
CEREBUS COULD BEAT GIRLY-BOY WITH ONE HAND TIED BEHIND HIS BACK
OH, AYE -- BUT GIRLY-BOY IS THE ONE SITTING AND TALKING WITH

LISTEN to CEREBUS CAN'T JUST STAND AROUND ALL DAY LISTENING TO CEREBUS GOING CRAZY!
TWITCH!
CEREBUS ... HAS A TAVERN TO RUN
WRIK
AYE! AYE! AYE!
LOT OF WORK - A LOT OF IMPORTANT WORK TO BE DONE
(AYE?)
(LIKE WHAT?)
HA! LIKE:
TWITCH
SKETCH SKETCH
AYE
SKETCH SKETCH
LIKE CLEANING!
TWITCH
SQUISH
SLAP
WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE
TWITCH
I KEEP ALL KEGS IN THE KNEE DEEP A GOOD FAN NG GET ALL A THESE CRACKS OFF! HERE SCRUB! DOWN SCRUB 'EM DOWN
WHEM PEWIPE
GET ALL THE DIRT OUTTA TH CORNERS CLEAN IT ALL UP BACK 'N FRONT UP 'N' DOWN INSIDE 'N' OUT CLEAN CLEAN CLEAN CLEAN
TINK THUMP BUMP SLAM
TOP OF THE BAR TOO ...LET'S GO HUP HUP HUP WORK WORK WORK
TWITCH
PE WIPE
WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE

DO YOU EVER SEE THE RAVE 'DAVE' S
?
NO
WHY?
SOMEONE AROUND HERE ONCE TOLD ME ABOUT A WRITER NAMED 'DAVE'
FUNNY
THE WAY I PICTURED HIM
HE LOOKED EXACTLY LIKE YOU
HUH!
NO.. NO I DON'T EVEN KNOW OF ANY WRITERS NAMED
DRINKS OFF THE BAR PLEASE.
COMING THROUGH.
WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE WIPE
IPE WIPE WIPE
?

OH, BARTENDER
(OH OH RIGHT
(HEH)
WIPE WIPE
WIPE WIPE
DRI
ANOTHER PINT OF STOUT HERE!
TINK...
TWITCH
AND THE YOUNG LADY WILL HAVE
OH, NO! I'M FINE
FOR RIGHT NOW...
THANKS
THAT'S A LOVELY OUTFIT YOU HAVE ON, EH THERE
OH, THANK YOU
THE CLOTHING MUST BE THE OLD ACE OF SPADES I I'M NOT MISTAKEN
GASP. THAT'S RIGHT YOU DID YOU KNOW?
THEY ALWAYS HAVE THE BEST CLOTHES
YES, THEY DO I'VE
TWITCH
GRIND
TWITCH
GRK

THAT PRICK BEHAVED FIRST NO SWEARING NOW HE GETS JAKA-- AND HE GETS
TWITCH
TWITCH
GRIN
SHUT UP! HE HASN'T GOT HER YET.
YES, NO HE HASN'T HASN'T
SHUT. UP!
CEREBUS HAS TO CALM DOWN. BREATHE!
MUCH BETTER
PRETTY CLEVER OF HIM-- TO GET CEREBUS TO POUR HIS DRINKS
MAKES IT LOOK AS IF HE'S IN CHARGE
AYE. AYE. AYE
PAT PAT PAT PITTA PITT FIT
CEREBUS HAS TO GET CONTROL OF HIS TAVERN BACK
AYE! AYE! AYE!
CUT HIM OFF!
BUT HOW?!
CEREBUS CAN'T CUT HIM OFF HE HASN'T DRUNK
AYE AYE AYE
THERE HAS TO BE A WAY TO

RICK.
THUMP
...
YES?
LISTEN. CAREFULLY.
O-KAY(?)
PIT PAT
PIT PAT
TWITCH
CEREBUS IS GOING OUT TO WASH THE FRONT WINDOWS. SO! IF ANYONE COMES IN...
BE SURE AND TELL THEM WHERE CEREBUS IS.
BUT..
BUT
SKRCH
IF YOU'RE WASHING THE FRONT WINDOWS .. THEY'LL SEE YOU .. ON THE WAY IN ..
WON'T THEY?
WELL RIGHT!
EXACTLY!
TWITCH
WAPH!
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
KLIK KLAK

ALL RIGHT. CEREBUS CAN KEEP AN EYE ON THEM FROM HERE.
HA! HA! HA!
IS CEREBUS INSANE?!? CEREBUS JUST MADE A BROOM!
(CEREBUS THOUGHT HE HANDLED THAT PRETTY WELL.)
HA HA HA
SHUT UP!
(PSST.
WHAT.
CEREBUS SHOULD'VE BROUGHT SOMETHING TO WASH WINDOWS WITH.)
BUCKET
BUCKET
BLOCKET
BUCKET
WHERE'S A !
SPLISH SPLASH SPLISH SPLASH SPLISH SPLASH
ERT.
OH NO! THEY'RE GETTING UP!
PANT PANT
SHE'S TAKING HIM UP STAIRS
(CEREBUS HAS TO DO SOMETHING.)
BUT WHAT?!
TWITCH
THROW COLD WATER ON 'EM!
LOCK THE FRONT DOOR!
KLIK KLAK
RUN AWAY..

RIGHT OUT THERE?
UH HUH
YOU CAN SEE WHERE THEY'RE CLEARING A SPACE FOR THE BONFIRE
. . . LATER . .
. . WITH ALL THE DANCING, THE CORN STALKS GET TRAMPLED DOWN . . . AND THE WHOLE FIELD BECOMES . . LIKE A SOFT CARPET
TICK
TICK
SO.
UHH
DO YOU WANT TO GO OUT TO THE BONFIRE
WITH UH WITH ME I MEAN?
TUMP TUMP TUMP
TWITCH
SPLASH

WIPE
WIPE
WIPE
WIPE
YOU SME... REALLY BAD. IF YOU'LL TAKE A BATH - USING LOTS OF SOAP - AND GET SOME CLEAN CLOTHES FOR TONIGHT, I'LL MEET YOU BY THE FENCE AT THE BACK OF THE FIELD.
BECAUSE I REALLY LIKE YOU
OKAY?
O-OKAY..
I UH.. I MEAN

SURE!
GOOD
I'LL SEE YOU THERE

TWITCH
WIPE

AHEM
I'M UH I'M GOING TO GET SOME CLEAN CLOTHES
WHEN I GET BACK I WAS WONDERING IF I COULD TAKE A BATH IF YOU WOULD
IF YOU WOULD MIND F... IF
"F" WHAT?
F I USED YOUR BATHTUB
TWITCH

NOW DISTILLED ON THE WALL OF 151*
LAIRD McJOOLIE'S
SINGLE MALT
WHISKY IN A DRUM
PLOP
* THE FREIGHT CHARGES WERE KILLING US
DRIP
DRIP
SLURP

AARDVARK COMMENT

Same as last issue, yesterday morning Gerhard mentioned that it's time to get something together for the back of the book. Same as last issue, I really *didn't want to tear myself away from the pages I'm working on (issue 224, pages 10 and 11). Same as last issue, I had a letter in the morning's mail that had piqued my interest. Same as last issue, it was from someone who hadn't written in a year or so. Same as last issue, I am taking the easy way out and answering that letter rather than digging through the mound of paper breeding on my coffee table. Same as last issue, I am still suffering from post-dialogue:* From Hell *letdown (how do I follow something like* that*?). Same as last issue, I haven't been able to decide who I want to do the next one with (the leading contenders in my mind are Neil Gaiman, Barry Windsor-Smith, and Larry Marder — which will come as news to all three). Same as last issue, I'm postponing the decision — mainly because I'm really absorbed in doing* Rick's Story. *All that having been said:*

Dear Dave,

Sorry to have neglected you for almost a whole year now (or maybe just more than a year? I dunno. The sense of time has gone the way of that funny-smelling smoke that leaks out of my windows two or three times a week).

With what brain cells I haven't either killed or beaten into submission, I really enjoyed the "*From Hell*" dialogue. It made me think. Especially the part in #219 about "If we can keep progressing on our present course to a place where divergent philosophies and opinions are seen to be just that..."

This is the idea I was trying to express to you the very first time I wrote you in support of your First Amendment rights (in the U.S.A., anyway, despite whatever citizenship you have — and U.S. distributors and comics sellers have the same right, but we're getting off track). I've worked pretty hard to learn to tell the difference between the people who go around hurting each other because they disagree and those who simply choose to disagree, respectfully — and I've worked pretty hard to become one of the latter.

So, when my ex- (as of two days ago) girlfriend tried to tell me she'd lost respect for me because we couldn't agree, I knew the time to leave was soon.

And, Dave, don't think this is cheesy — but I've never *dated* a girl before ("other stuff" doesn't count as dating) — and it was just like you said. She always wanted to know what I was feeling, what I was thinking about, why I wasn't saying anything. Women don't just rape men's minds, they often rape each other's. Do you think that's a function of dating? or a function of women in general? (I believe a large chunk of it is insecurity, but I haven't any cohesive thoughts about the other chunks.)

The interesting bit about the relationship was that I, a woman, never once asked any of the "what are...?" questions above of her.

So, this being my first long-term-ish (long term — more than two months) relationship with a member of my own sex and gender, I have to say this:

I have a sneaking suspicion that Dave Sim was right, at least on this count. I was really beginning to see a strong resemblance between myself and the men whose brain tissue was being eaten in *Cerebus*.

Women, in short, suck. (please insert graphic dirty joke here)

But, really — "suck" is, I think, an appropriate term. Most people who want women to "suck them off" enjoy the sensation (the ones who want it and don't enjoy it, we won't even discuss this time around).

So, she's doing, in general, something you like — "sucking up" we can call it — paying attention, making you feel strong and (whoa — "feel"? Is that where it starts?) generally really cool — and suddenly the sucking up is "sucking out" and it gets to be too much. Every time you talk to her you start to feel (there's that word again) like your head is collapsing, and, buddy, you'd better agree with everything she says or you are IN FOR IT.

And you can't think, you can't think at all. They hate that.

Dave, why are our "lovers" different from "people"? Why do we take such liberties with people we claim to care about, but we're always careful to tip the waitress in a strange city whom we'll probably never see again (besides "'cuz she's cute," I mean)?

Apparently, courtesy and respect are only for strangers. It's the ones we claim to care for to whom we are the most cruel.

When everybody realizes that little bit of "*From Hell*" I quoted at the very beginning — even if it isn't everybody but just a large portion of the world population — maybe we can find the balance between the heart and the mind — emotion and logic — "feminine" and "masculine."

With the luck the human race has had so far, I wouldn't be surprised if, at the end, when we finally understand each other, monkeys flew out of all our butts and heads.

E. Templeton,
312 1/2 W. Maple Street,
Lansing, MI 48906

Which should (at the very least) be worth a special 90-minute edition of Nightline *("Monkeys fly out of our butts and heads. What does it mean? I'm Ted Koppel and tonight on* Nightline*...")*

Your parenthetical aside ("whoa — 'feel'? Is that where it starts?") really jumped out at me. It raised a new possibility for me that perhaps women have no greater an understanding of their emotions than men have of women's emotions. In the gender where emotions are pre-eminent over thought and reason, it is impossible to achieve an accurate understanding of the different emotions and their different respective natures. Could it be that women recognize their emotions in an emotional way only? It makes an odd sort of sense but is a very peculiar potential reality to contemplate from this side of the gender divide. Women love their happiness? hate their anger? their sadness depresses them? And since these emotions supersede thought and reason, this is the extent of women's relationships with their emotions? I'll be mulling that *one over for a while, let me tell you. My gut instinct (to answer the question off the top of my head) is that emotions are the Alpha and Omega of womankind. They don't "start" or "end." They are omnipresent and merely surface or submerge in turn in response to external and internal stimuli.*

Let me tackle it from another direction, attempting to build on this new (to me, anyway) proposition — that women feel about their emotions, they don't think about them:

Let's take a female term: Emotional Needs.

It seems to me that the institutionalizing of Emotional Needs as a term, as a fact of existence, as a "truth," is one of the problems which has brought us to our current and peculiar impasse. When I use a word like "need," it has a specific meaning for me. I need air. (I need water. I need sleep. I need food. I need shelter and clothing if it is minus-25 degrees outside. If it is plus-75 degrees outside, I don't need shelter and clothing (except in the sense that I need them to avoid getting arrested for vagrancy and public nudity — but unquestionably at a much lesser degree of need).

By this reasoning, I don't need reassurance. I don't need love. I desire *reassurance, I* desire *love.*

Is there any merit in the argument that the exact point where a society becomes unable to distinguish between need and desire is the point where it begins to lose its forward momentum and begins to erode into self-indulgence and materialism? Interesting thought. Isn't there a world of difference between the "pursuit of happiness" and the "pursuit of gratification"? I think there is, but I doubt very much that I'm in the majority in thinking that way. Is an emotion-based society capable (or even interested) in drawing a distinction between the two? And if an emotion-based society is incapable and disinterested in drawing a distinction, isn't that a problem? Am I the only one who sees "getting in touch with your inner child" as the misguided elevation of self-centeredness, helplessness, ineffectuality, and willfulness from the category of "character flaws" to the status of "virtues"?

As a comedian once said, "I don't mind my girlfriend having needs*, but every time she watches* Oprah *she has five more."*

From my (admittedly skewed*) vantage point, the emotion-based existence seems fraught with free-floating anxiety, and perhaps "women feel about their emotions, they don't think about them" might be part of the explanation. The term itself — free-floating anxiety — seems a bit "off" as I consider it. Emotion-based existence going "society-wide" seems to have changed anxiety from "free-floating" to "adhesive." Everyone has it and everyone is encouraged to "stick it" to something.* Many *somethings.* Anything. Everything. *Unhappiness, disorientation, sadness, feeling a little blue, a little anxious, we are encouraged to strip-mine our memory banks, our hearts, our minds, and our souls in search of something, anything we can stick them to. The emotion-based perception would seem to be that doing this is virtuous. You can't ignore anxiety (that's Denial); you can't overcome anxiety (that's Suppression). There is nothing for anxiety, by this reasoning, but that you dredge up whatever you need to find inside yourself to magnify it and add to it.*

Odd.

Anyway, I think this might be at the root of the "what are you thinking about? what are you feeling?" line of inquiry. "You don't look blissfully in touch with your inner child — so please tell me, to what are you attaching your *adhesive anxiety at this very moment? Spill your guts and I will try to help you." The problem I always had with the "what are you thinking?" question (one of the hidden benefits of 186 is that my girlfriend — three years and counting — stopped asking that question after she read* Reads*) is that — to explain what I'm thinking — I usually have to go back quite a ways to what I* started *thinking about and then chart all of the avenues and digressions and internal arguments I followed to get to what I'm* currently *thinking about — and then explain the history of all the different elements that I'm juggling relative to the current subject. "Well, why did you* ask *if you didn't want to* know*?" I used to think as their eyes glazed over and they stifled a yawn. "What are you feeling?" always left me at a loss. I'm feeling the seat cushion under my ass, I'm feeling the arm of the chair, I'm feeling the carpet under my feet.*

With the more extreme examples of emotion-based individuals, the lack of an outward show of inner bliss and joy becomes the perfect thing onto which to project their own adhesive anxiety.

You look (unhappy/angry/depressed).

"Well, I'm not."

As that conversation (and I'm sure you know it well) unfolds, yes, there is a sensation of someone taking a vacuum cleaner to your frontal lobes and a pick and a shovel to your heart. It seems nothing will do but that she pursue the line of questioning until she

has extracted what she is looking for — unhappiness, anger, depression, frustration, rage.

Which I always thought was ridiculously unfair. I mean, I wasn't bashing away at her head with an ice-pick, going, "Oh, you are too! *Right now you're thinking about a specious corollary between the Book of Job and folk tales and shoring up your flawed reasoning with Joseph Campbell-style secular humanism in a fatuous attempt to make Carl Jung's symbolism an overarching context for all human philosophy instead of accurately perceiving it as the simplistic degradation of the Socratic Method that it is. Don't lie to me, you bitch! I know you are!"*

Summing up:

I don't think what you saw in your ex-girlfriend was "insecurity" so much as "adhesive anxiety." In my view, where perception has degraded itself to the point where it is unable to differentiate between "need" and "desire," where that perception has gone "society-wide," and where that perception is supported by relative morality wherein there is no good or bad and all ethics are situational...

No. Too big a can of worms. Let's see. How about this? Just for the sake of argument, substitute Emotional Desires for Emotional Needs.

Sounds a lot less urgent and imperative, doesn't it? "My Emotional Desires are not being met." Poooor baby. It becomes impossible to take seriously in a way that Emotional Needs demands to be taken seriously. Emotional Desires. Solutions present themselves immediately: Well, shit, learn to control them. Take charge of yourself. Grow up. Deal with them.

Oh, here's a good one:

Shut. Up. About. Them.

Or as a woman writer titled her book (complimentary gold logo Cerebus 0 *to the first person to send in her name — which I've forgotten):* If You Can't Live Without Me Then Why Aren't You Dead?

Better luck next time, Ms. Templeton.

continued

FROM COVER

So I was full of trouble, full as I could be; and didn't know what to do. At last I had an idea; and I says, I'll go and write the letter — and *then* see if I can pray. Why, it was astonishing, the way I felt as light as a feather right straight off, and my troubles all gone. So I got a piece of paper and a pencil, all glad and excited, and set down and wrote:

Miss Watson, your runaway nigger Jim is down here two mile below Pikesville, and Mr. Phelps has got him and he will give him up for the reward if you send.

HUCK FINN

I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking — thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell. And went on thinking. And got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me all the time; in the day and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a-floating along, talking and singing and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, 'stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had smallpox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the *only* one he's got now; and then I happened to look around and see that paper.

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: "All right, then, I'll *go* to hell" — and tore it up.

It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head, and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.

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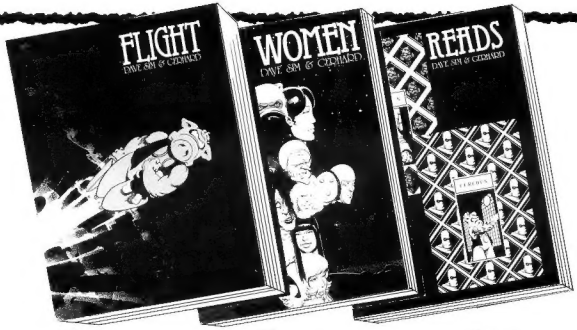

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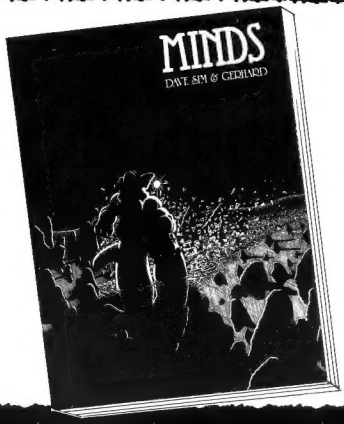

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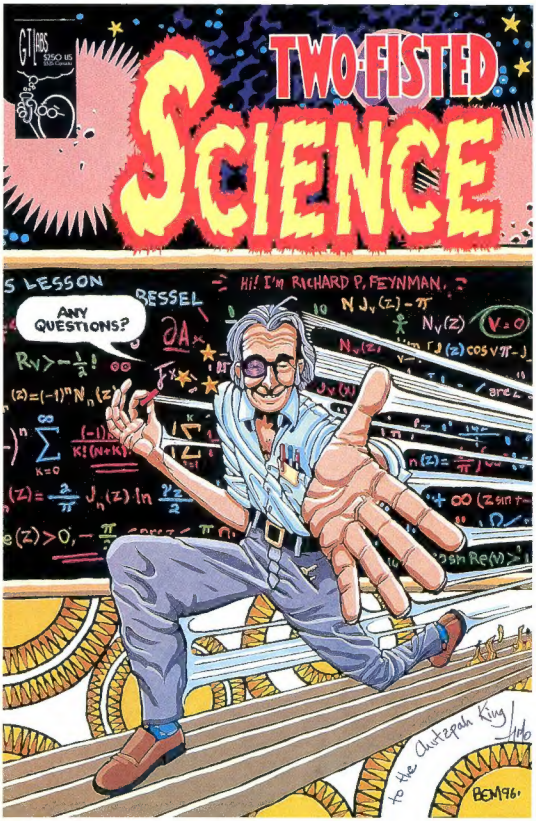

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